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**By CHRIS BOURNEA**

Staff Writer

Columbus OH -- Internationally acclaimed trumpeter and music educator Pharez Whitted will be among the headliners at the 13th Annual Creekside Jazz and Blues Festival, which will be held June 17-19 along Mill and Granville streets in the Columbus suburb of Gahanna.

The festival will feature three days of live entertainment by local and national blues and jazz acts on five stages. Whitted will perform on Friday, June 17, from 9 to 10:30 p.m. on the Community Stage.

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Originally from Indianapolis, Whitted is the son of the late singer and bassist Virtue Hampton Whitted and the nephew of renowned trombonist Slide Hampton. With such a prestigious pedigree, Whitted was exposed to a wide range of musical influences growing up.

"I listened to Louis Armstrong, Dizzy Gillespie," he said in an exclusive interview with CP2, "probably the who's who of jazz."

As much as Whitted loves performing, he is also passionate about music education. He holds a master's degree from the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music and is currently the director of jazz studies at Chicago State University.

Whitted also spent seven years teaching music at The Ohio State University in Columbus from 1993 to 2000. His performance at the Creekside Blues & Jazz Festival will mark the first time he has performed in
Columbus
since his departure more than a decade ago.

Whitted said he's looking forward to sharing the stage with the Columbus-based Liquid Crystal Project jazz band, but he would eventually like to play Columbus' historic Lincoln Theatre with his own band.

"My goal is to have a performance there," he said, "and that would be the homecoming."

Whitted is currently touring in support of his most recent album, 2010's critically acclaimed "Transient Journey." He said he enjoys playing outdoor festivals such as the Creekside Blues & Jazz Festival.

“At outdoor festivals, usually can bring your family,” he said. “You can sit down, lay back, relax.”

When playing live, Whitted draws on his years of experience in performing for audiences around the world. He credits his longevity to being a classically-trained musician.

“I call it trained in the fundamentals. I think you can play whatever style of music you choose to play if you’re trained in the fundamentals,” he said. “The more you learn, the more you know, the more you can express yourself.”

Music education is important not only to help youth become more well-rounded, but to instill an appreciation for creative expression in general, Whitted said.

“It plays a role in a balance, teaches people compassion, the ability to appreciate something beautiful,” he said. “It helps you think outside the box and see the possibilities. Every great mind in some way, the arts contributed to it.”

Whitted said he is encouraged by up-and-coming musicians who are helping to promote jazz to younger generations such as Esperanza Spalding, the 26-year-old jazz bassist who won this year’s Grammy for Best New Artist.

“I like Esperanza. I really enjoy her CD. She’s very creative,” Whitted said. “I think anything where it’s good music and it’s received well, that’s always a positive.”

For a complete schedule and more information about the Creekside Jazz & Blues Festival, visit Creeksidebluesandjazz.com or call the Gahanna Convention & Visitors Bureau at (614) 418-9114.